

Amendments To The Claims:

The text of all pending claims (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with strikethrough. When strikethrough cannot easily be perceived, or when five or fewer characters are deleted, [[double brackets]] are used to show the deletion. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Listing of Claims:

1-11 (canceled).

12. (previously presented) A method of continuously monitoring changes in indications of vital functions of a patient, employing a tube used to effectively convey fluids into and out of the body of said patient, wherein said tube is an endotracheal tube, wherein at least one imaging sensor is incorporated in the anterior face of said tube, and wherein said sensor is coupled to a conduit, continuously acquiring signals and transmitting signals via said conduit; said method comprises collecting said signals transmitted via said conduit and interpreting said signals and/or displaying said signals; thereby performing said continuous monitoring of changes in indications of vital functions of said patient;

wherein said tube is placed within said body of said patient for a substantial period of time, wherein said substantial period of time is a prolonged endotracheal intubation and wherein said continuous monitoring is performed during at least a substantial portion of said period; and

wherein said fluids are selected from the group consisting of: gases and liquids, and conveyed to sustain a vital function of said patient, concomitantly with said monitoring.

13-14. (cancelled)

15. (previously presented) The method of continuously monitoring changes in indications of vital functions of a patient, as in claim 12 and wherein said signals are images.

16-17. (cancelled)

18. (previously presented) The method of continuously monitoring changes in indications of vital functions of a patient, as in claim 12 and wherein said tube is placed inside the trachea of said patient.

19. (new) The method of claim 12, wherein said imaging sensor comprises a CCD or a CMOS chip.

20. (new) The method of claim 12, wherein said imaging sensor comprises a camera.

21. (New) The method of claim 12, wherein said imaging sensor is selected from the group consisting of microphones, thermal sensors and gas sensors.

22. (New) The method of claim 12, wherein said indications of vital functions of a patient comprise one or more of accumulation of secretions or development of excessive or diminished lung noises, or a combination thereof.